



MAPPING THE RISK

Flood Map Update: Mobile County

Background

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has undertaken a multi-year engineering analyses and mapping effort. The analyses and mapping will better identify, assess, and communicate hazards and risks associated with riverine and coastal flooding in Alabama.

Through this effort, FEMA produced updated Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) for Baldwin and Mobile Counties in 2007 and 2010, respectively. However, in these two counties, the mapping effort did not include new engineering analyses. The 2007 and 2010 updates focused primarily on digital conversion of the existing FIRMs using the latest FEMA specifications.

Currently, FEMA has a cooperative agreement with the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) Office of Water Resources (OWR) to assess the risk of riverine and coastal flooding in Baldwin and Mobile Counties with new engineering analyses and to produce updated FIRMs.

Phases of Flood Map Update

The mapping effort is structured around four phases:

1. Scoping
2. Map Production
3. Preliminary FIRM and FIS
4. Effective FIRM and FIS

These phases are further broken down into production steps, as shown in the figure to the right.

Current Status

Phase 1, Scoping, was completed for Mobile County coastal flooding sources in December of 2010 and for riverine flooding sources in November 2009. During the Scoping Phase, FEMA, ADECA, and Mobile County stakeholders identified and prioritized the mapping needs for the County. This flood risk decision process utilized data collected from the County and local communities at the Scoping Meeting and included such information as historical flooding information; existing flood hazard data; elevation, hydrologic, and hydraulic data, and base mapping.

Mobile Coastal Scoping Highlights

The 2010 County-wide Flood Insurance Study and Rate Maps for Mobile County include 100 miles of detailed coastal studies from the Mississippi State line to the Baldwin County line. These detailed studies were completed in 1983. With the availability of new topographic information for Mobile County and significant climatological changes and relative sea level rise, the 100 miles of open coastline and interior embayment shorelines were prioritized, through the Scoping process, for re-study with detailed engineering methods.

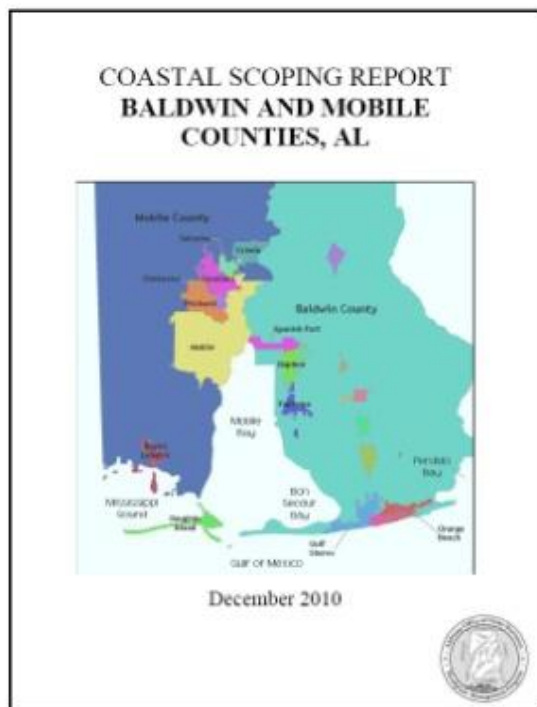
PHASE 1 – SCOPING

- Initial Community Coordination
- Scoping Meeting
- Review and validate existing flood risk data
- Discuss flood mapping needs and flood risk concerns

PHASE 2 – MAP PRODUCTION – *upcoming 2012 and 2013*

PHASE 3 – PRELIMINARY FIRM AND FIS- *upcoming 2013*

PHASE 4 – EFFECTIVE FIRM AND FIS – *upcoming 2014*



Mobile Riverine Scoping Highlights

The 2010 County-wide Flood Insurance Study and Rate Maps for Mobile County also include 570 miles of detailed riverine studies and 47 miles of approximate riverine studies. These studies were completed between 1977 and 1994. Through the Scoping process, 34.6 miles of existing detailed studies and 47 miles of existing approximate studies were identified for re-study with detailed and approximate engineering analyses, respectively. Additionally, 202 stream miles were newly identified for approximate studies.

Flood Mapping Terms

Detailed Study - A flood hazard study that, at a minimum, results in the delineation of floodplain boundaries for the 1-percent-annual-chance (100-year) flood and includes the determination of base flood elevations (BFEs) or flood depths.

Approximate Study - A flood hazard study that results in the delineation of floodplain boundaries for the 1-percent-annual-chance (100-year) flood, but does not include the determination of BFEs or flood depths.

Why is the Flood Map Update Important to Me?

Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) are important tools in the effort to protect lives and properties in Baldwin County. The FIRMs indicate the risk for flooding throughout the County. However, the current maps are out of date. Some formerly rural areas were never mapped in detail, and other areas haven't been re-mapped in years. Over time, water flow and drainage patterns have changed dramatically due to surface erosion, land use and natural forces. The likelihood of inland, riverine and coastal flooding in certain areas has changed along with these factors. New digital mapping techniques will provide more detailed, reliable and current data on Baldwin County flood hazards.

While the FIRMs will not become effective for another 30 months or more, it is important for professionals in the development and building industry to understand what the changes in the new maps are and what they mean. These changes may not only affect how and where structures can be built, but there may be implications to the federal flood insurance requirements. As the preliminary maps become available in 2013, developers and builders can:

- Use the updated map data to determine where and how to build structures more safely and how high to build to reduce the risk of flood damage;
- Assist residents and business owners to re-examine the status of their properties, so that they have proper insurance coverage and can save on costs; and
- Assist residents and business owners with requests for new elevation certificates. Besides those requests that will occur in instances of new construction, requests may also be made by property owners seeking to fulfill the insurance "grandfathering" requirement or those planning to file an appeal or protest during the Public Comment Period.



How can I Participate?

Mobile County residents are encouraged to visit the ADECA floodplain management website for information about the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and the importance of floodplain management in Alabama:

www.adeca.alabama.gov/floods

The website also includes the Riverine and Coastal Scoping reports describing Mobile County's project overview, status, funding and summary of availability of LiDAR. To access these reports visit the website referenced above, click on *County Status*, select *Mobile County*, then click on "*Click here to view county activities and maps*", then click on "*Project Planning Report*".

Public outreach activities will continue throughout the flood mapping effort. Mobile County residents are encouraged to visit both the ADECA website and your local community website for informational updates.

Contact Information

Questions regarding the flood mapping effort should be addressed to:

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Distribution Information

In an effort to reach the development and building industry this Information Sheet was distributed to the following organizations:

- *AL Association of Emergency Managers*
- *AL Association of Floodplain Managers*
- *AL Chapter of American Planning Association (APA)*
- *AL Chapter of American Public Works Association (APWA)*
- *AL Section of American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)*
- *AL Society of Professional Engineers (Affiliate of ASCE)*
- *AL Society of Professional Land Surveyors*
- *Mobile Area Chapter of AL Society of Professional Engineers*
- *Home Builders Association of AL*
- *Home Builders Association of Metropolitan Mobile*
- *South AL Regional Planning Commission*

Recommendations for additional development and building industry organizations are encouraged. If there is an organization you would like added to the distribution list, please contact OWR at the address presented above.